

Fire in the Interface

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Special Feature: Firewise Forum

The Firewise website has an interactive section called the Firewise Forum, to which users can post entries and comments, network, chat, and find information related to wildland-urban interface fire issues. There is also a new section designed expressly for young adults called the Firewise Generation, whose purpose is to help young adults better understand wildfire, and to help them put Firewise practices to work around homes and in local communities.

Visit the forum at: <http://www.firewise.org/forum/index.htm>

Research: Shrub and Mulch Flammability

Wildfires are an important and necessary ecological process in most natural areas of the southern United States. However, with increasing numbers of homes being constructed in close proximity to natural vegetation, risk of wildfire damage to homes in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) is increasing. It is important to understand both the flammability of natural areas surrounding the home landscape and how landscaping design, materials, and plant species influence flammability and fire behavior.

Several studies conducted through a partnership between the Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry, the University of Florida, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology are addressing these critical issues. One such study quantifies and ranks the flammability of ornamental shrubs in the southern United States in order to provide better information for firewise plant lists for southern WUI landscapes and to improve WUI fire behavior modeling. Another study measured the rate of spread and heat release for fires moving through four common southern mulches under natural conditions. The results of both studies will provide important information for new models that will be used for predicting fire spread and structural ignitions in a variety of landscape conditions.

For more information about this research, visit: http://www.interfacesouth.org/research/flam_natural_veg_and_home_landscapes.html



Upcoming Event: **Wildland-Urban Interface 2009**

WUI 2009 is the premier conference for wildland fire service personnel and leadership, bringing together some of the most influential people in the wildland firefighting community to exchange ideas, learn from experts and view state-of-the art products and services to address the growing WUI problem. Highlights will include conference workshops and case studies, headline news topics, and certification courses. Some session topics include implications of climate change for drought and wildland fires; prevention, mitigation, and education; and Firewise training. This conference will be held March 22-26 in Reno, Nevada.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.iafc.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=100>

For more upcoming events visit InterfaceSouth at: <http://www.interfacesouth.org/resources/events.html>

In the News: **Australia's Stay and Defend Approach: Up in Smoke?**

With 200 feared dead and entire towns declared arson crime scenes, Australians are trying to determine if anything could have been done to prevent the loss of so much life and land. The country's policy of allowing rural residents to stay and defend their homes during wildfires is already under close scrutiny. While some of the fires are contained, firefighters are still battling flames north of Melbourne. In addition to the grim death toll, about 5,000 people have been left homeless and roughly 1,351 square miles (roughly the area of Rhode Island) have burned since last week.

To read the full story visit: <http://features.csmonitor.com/globalnews/2009/02/10/australias-stay-and-defend-approach-up-in-smoke/>

For additional current news articles on WUI topics, visit InterfaceSouth at: <http://www.interfacesouth.org/inthenews.html>

Literature: **Mulch Flammability**

Despite the devastating affects they can have, wildland fires are a natural disturbance that many native ecosystems depend on for regeneration. As the U.S. population increases, more individuals are building their homes in wildlands rather than urban landscapes, creating areas often referred to as the wildland-urban interface. Landscape beds with mulches that are not maintained properly may contribute to fire spread to structures during a wildfire or serve as an ignition source. The objective



of this study was to determine the flammability characteristics of four mulch types (pine straw, large and small pine bark, and shredded cypress mulch) to determine which would be best for homeowners.

To read the full article visit:

http://www.interfacesouth.org/resources/files/Zipperer_mulchproceedings%5B2%5D.pdf

For more articles on WUI issues visit InterfaceSouth at: <http://www.interfacesouth.org/resources/literature.html>

Website: Homeowner's Wildfire Mitigation Guide

The Homeowner's Wildfire Mitigation Guide is a Web site that is organized to give you an opportunity to make changes to your home and the surroundings to reduce the possibility of damage from wildfires. Some of the changes can be done very quickly and relatively inexpensively. Others may require more effort, expense, and, in some cases, professional help. Information on the site was compiled by a number of people at University of California, Berkeley, and is based on input from fire tests, observations of wildfire damage, and input from those who are involved in firefighting.

To view this Web site visit:

<http://groups.ucanr.org/HWMG/index.cfm>

For more Web links about interface issues visit

<http://www.interfacesouth.org/resources/websites.html>

Contact Us!

If you have any questions or comments please contact Annie Hermansen-Baez, ahermansen@fs.fed.us, 352-376-3271 or the project intern at swuintern@yahoo.com.

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